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FIFTH COMMITTEE
64th meeting
held on
Friday, 31 May 1996
at 6.30 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIRST PART* OF THE 64th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. VILCHEZ ASHER (Nicaragua)

later: Mr. AMARI (Tunisia)
(Vice-Chairman)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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* The summary record of the second part of the meeting, to be reconvened at a later date, appears as document A/C.5/50/SR.64/Add.1

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The meeting was called to order at 9.55 p.m.

1. Mr. THORNE (United Kingdom) said that his delegation had received the legal opinion which it had asked for in connection with the borrowing of funds from peace-keeping operations in order to finance other activities, and delegations could obtain a copy of it in the conference room.

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued) (A/C.5/50/L.61, A/C.5/50/L.66 and A/C.5/50/L.71)

Draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.61

2. Ms. ROTHEISER (Austria) introduced draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.61, entitled "Implementation of the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997", and recommended that the Committee should adopt it without a vote.

3. Draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.61 was adopted.

4. Ms. INCERA (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and in explanation of position, said that she acknowledged the fundamental importance of the reaffirmation of the budget process as approved in General Assembly resolution 41/213 and programme planning regulation 5.2, and the recognition that Member States could only propose changes to mandated programmes and activities in the context of intergovernmental negotiations. Paragraph 5 of the resolution was likewise of great importance because it implied that the Secretariat would maintain existing hiring practices, including the hiring of short-term personnel, which meant that the principle of equitable geographical distribution would be guaranteed. The Group was also pleased that the Fifth Committee had recognized that the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 did not constitute a precedent and it hoped that the Secretariat's budget proposals for the following biennium would adhere to the guidelines in resolution 41/213. Finally, the report requested in paragraph 2 of the draft resolution was awaited with interest because it would enable the General Assembly to legislate on economy measures as decided in its resolution 50/214.

5. Referring to paragraph 51 of part III of General Assembly resolution 50/214, which requested the Secretary-General to appoint a deputy to the Secretary of the Fifth Committee as soon as possible and no later than the beginning of the first part of the resumed fiftieth session, she recalled that the need to strengthen the secretariat of the Fifth Committee had been recognized by all, including the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. She therefore wished to receive an explanation as to why the General Assembly's decision on the matter had not been implemented. Moreover, the proposal to cut one General Service post was inconsistent with the wish to strengthen the secretariat, and on no account would her delegation accept further cuts in the meagre resources available to the secretariat since it was responsible for servicing both the Fifth Committee and the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

Draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.66

6. Mr. KELLY (Ireland) introduced draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.66, entitled "Implementation of the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997" and, after indicating that the Committee had taken note of paragraph 12 of the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/C.5/50/67 and adding that Member States had been unable to reach agreement on the cost reductions mentioned therein, recommended that the Committee should adopt it. It was his view that the draft was a consensus text.

7. Mr. GELBER (United States of America) said that his delegation had serious reservations about the draft resolution, which contained no detailed proposals on how the additional expenditure of $25 million in respect of new activities would be absorbed. His Government could not accept any measure which would result in an increase in the budget expenditures approved for the biennium 1996-1997. In the circumstances, it was unnecessary to enter into additional commitments, which was why his delegation had joined the consensus, but he requested the Secretary-General to propose savings to offset the proposed expenditure as soon as possible, without waiting until 1 September 1996. He reminded the Committee that the United States would be unable to pay contributions of $80 million unless the budget ceiling was respected.

8. Draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.66 was adopted.

9. Mr. MANCINI (Italy), speaking on behalf of the European Union, supported by Mr. HANSON (Canada), said that, with regard to the statement made by the representative of the United States of America, it should be recalled that all Member States were obliged to pay their contributions in full, on time and without conditions.

10. Ms. INCERA (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and in explanation of position, said that she would have expected the Fifth Committee to approve the amounts requested by the Secretary-General to carry out activities in Guatemala, Haiti, El Salvador and Rwanda and regretted that it had not done so. She hoped that the necessary appropriations would be approved in the context of the performance report and that in future, when new expenditures were to be authorized, due account would be taken of their nature. As the Secretary-General had stated, if the Secretariat was to achieve further savings it would be unable to fulfil its functions, which was unacceptable to the Group of 77 and China. They therefore fully endorsed paragraph 2 of the draft resolution and hoped that the Secretary-General would take account of the provisions of paragraph 3 in seeking possible means of absorption.

Draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.71

11. Mr. MADDENS (Rapporteur) introduced draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.71, entitled "Conference servicing of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change", and said that it was a logical progression from draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.66. He requested the Committee to adopt it without a vote.

12. Draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.71 was adopted.

13. Mr. GELBER (United States of America), speaking in explanation of position, regretted that ways to finance expenditure relating to conference services without exceeding the budget appropriations had not been specified in the resolution and requested the Secretary-General to provide such information as soon as possible.

14. Mr. GOKHALE (India) said that although his delegation had joined the consensus, it had done so on the understanding that the issue would be settled in accordance with resolution 41/213, which defined the procedure for preparing the Organization's budgets.

15. Mr. RAMLAL (Trinidad and Tobago) recalled that the General Assembly had decided in its resolution 50/115 to include in the calendar of conferences and meetings for 1996-1997 the sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its subsidiary bodies, and that the Fifth Committee had subsequently decided that conference services for all meetings of the Conference would be funded from the regular budget. His Government had joined the consensus for practical reasons stemming from time considerations on the understanding that the adoption of the draft resolution would ensure full funding for all services provided for meetings of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies during the biennium 1996-1997.

16. Mr. STEIN (Germany) said that he supported the statements made by the representatives of India and Trinidad and Tobago.

17. Mr. TOYA (Japan) stressed that the draft resolution just adopted would not have any negative implications for future meetings.

AGENDA ITEM 118: JOINT INSPECTION UNIT (continued) (A/C.5/50/L.64)

Draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.64

18. Mr. MARCONDÉS DE CARVALHO (Brazil) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Chairman and recommended that the Committee should adopt it without a vote.

19. Mr. Amari (Tunisia) took the Chair.

20. Ms. RODRIGUEZ ABASCAL (Cuba) said that the paragraph beginning with the words "Stressing the need ...", which had been deleted during the consultations, was still in the Spanish text and she requested that that error should be corrected.

21. The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretariat had taken note of the statement by Cuba and suggested that the Committee should adopt the draft resolution.

22. It was so decided.

23. Draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.64 was adopted.

AGENDA ITEM 122: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING FORCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST (continued)

(a) UNITED NATIONS DISENGAGEMENT OBSERVER FORCE (continued) (A/C.5/50/L.54)

Draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.54

24. Mr. BLUKIS (Lithuania), introduced on behalf of the Chairman draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.54, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Peace-keeping Forces in the Middle East: United Nations Disengagement Observer Force", which had been drawn up following informal consultations. He briefly summarized the contents of the draft resolution. The first four paragraphs dealt with the financial situation of the Force. Paragraphs 7 to 9, which were the most important ones, concerned the funds approved and the amounts assessed for the period from 1 December 1995 to 30 June 1997. In paragraph 7, the General Assembly would appropriate the amount of approximately $16 million gross for the period from 1 December 1995 to 31 May 1996, which had been apportioned earlier for expenditures that the Secretary-General was authorized to incur. In paragraph 8, the General Assembly would appropriate the amount of approximately $2.7 million gross and apportion that amount among Member States in accordance with paragraphs 8 to 10 of its resolution 50/20. In paragraph 9, it would appropriate the amount of approximately $32.2 million gross for a period of 12 months beginning on 1 July 1996, to be assessed on Member States at the monthly rate of $2,687,908 gross, subject to the decision of the Security Council to extend the mandate of the Force beyond 31 May 1996. He recommended that the Committee should adopt the draft resolution.

25. Draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.54 was adopted.

26. Mr. STEIN (Germany), speaking in explanation of his delegations's position, said that his remarks would apply to all peace-keeping operation budgets that would be approved at the current session and to the budget that had just been adopted, namely the budgets submitted under agenda items 122 to 125, 128, 131 to 137, and 167 to 169. Although his delegation had joined the consensus on all those budgets, it had reservations. All in all, the General Assembly would approve expenditures amounting to approximately $1.3 million. It was known that those expenditures would not be completely covered by the contributions of Member States since one of them had announced its intention to limit its contributions to peace-keeping operation budgets to an amount that it considered appropriate. That unilateral decision would serve only to aggravate the already difficult financial situation facing the Organization at the current time and in the long term and would jeopardize the implementation of peace-keeping operations. In order to deal with those foreseeable consequences, during the informal consultations Germany had proposed limiting the expenditures that the Secretary-General would be authorized to incur to approximately 94 per cent of the amount estimated for the budget of each peace-keeping operation or, in other words, to freeze an amount corresponding to approximately 6 per cent of expenditures. Unfortunately, that idea had not received sufficient support within the Committee. His delegation, nevertheless, remained convinced that

that question should be dealt with in the interest of the Organization. He wished to stress once again that Germany fully supported peace-keeping operations and therefore had joined the consensus. None the less, it was not prepared to take the place of other Member States which did not pay their contributions, nor was it prepared either to accept any change in its assessment under the current scale.

(b) UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FORCE IN LEBANON (continued) (A/C.5/50/L.67)

Draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.67

27. Mr. BLUKIS (Lithuania), speaking in his capacity as coordinator of the informal consultations on the question under consideration, said that, in spite of the intense efforts made by the delegations concerned, it had not been possible to arrive at a consensus on draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.67, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Peace-keeping Forces in the Middle East: United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon".

28. Mr. HAMDAN (Lebanon) recalled that an earlier version of the draft resolution had been distributed. The document in question had therefore been discussed, and differences of views had arisen only on a single paragraph. With the support of other Arab countries, his delegation had proposed amendments. Following numerous consultations with the delegations concerned and since Lebanon wished to avoid politicizing the work of the Committee and to promote efforts to reach a consensus in accordance with established practice, his delegation had forgone certain paragraphs and agreed to accept a general paragraph which referred to a practical procedure and had no restricting implications, namely paragraph 7. Accordingly, his delegation hoped that the Committee was currently in a position to adopt the draft resolution by consensus, with that version of paragraph 7.

29. The meeting was suspended at 10.50 and resumed at 11.55.

30. The CHAIRMAN said that, since it was difficult to reach agreement on draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.67, he proposed that the Committee should defer consideration of agenda item 122 (b) and the other agenda items until Monday, 3 June, at 3 p.m. Before adjourning the meeting, he invited the representative of Lebanon to introduce the draft resolution.

31. Mr. HAMDAN (Lebanon) said that his delegation, with the support of other Arab delegations, wished to formally introduce draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.67 in the Committee for adoption. His delegation had done everything possible in cooperation with the delegations concerned to reach a compromise. It had therefore agreed to withdraw certain amendments that it had put forward and to maintain only the amendment relating to paragraph 7, which requested the Secretary-General to include in his next report on the financing of the Force a full evaluation of damages resulting from the incident that had occurred at the headquarters of the Force in Qana, on 18 April 1996. The text did not contain anything that deviated from the current practices followed by the Committee.

32. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there were no comments, the consideration of the draft resolution and the other questions would be deferred until Monday, 3 June, at 3 p.m.

The meeting rose at 12.15 a.m.